The Billboard

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25 Cents

Gas-Pipe Broadcasting's a Biz

Four Colleges On Phone Line

IBS offers ad men new market thru regional net, schools the technical savvy

NEW YORK, Nov. 19.—Something new was quietly added to the field of network radio a week ago (12) when the Intercollegiate Broadcasting System tied together four Eastern Pennsylvania colleges—Swarthmore, Haverford, Bryn Mawr and the University of Pennsylvania—to form a regional college net operating on a permanent Class "B" telephone line. Long-range view in IBS's crystal ball is to establish regional webs like the Penn hook-up throughout the country, eventually pyramiding into a nationwide collegiate chain, tailor-made for advertisers as to audience and service. Now that the first toddling step has been taken, growth will undoubtedly be watched closely since IBS may be the answer to an ad man's dream—namely, a brand-new national broadcasting set-up that will deliver a lush market, easily reached and analyzed.

The Billboard Cover Feature

From the day of its birth, IBS has functioned as a service to the college stations, supplying them with the technical savvy for setting up their stations and also with plans for programing. Big service was, and still is, a book containing complete know-how in the form of detailed instructions, blueprints and charts for constructing the peculiar feed-in to the power line used by the campus stations. FCC regulation permits such stations to operate without a license.

Nine Years Old

Started in 1936 as an idea-germ in the minds of two inventive students at Brown University, the first unofficial sprout budded at Brown as an "over-the-roof-tops" system, referred to jokingly as the "gas-pipe circuit," but by February, 1940, IBS had met, confabbed and drafted a constitution which made it the official clearing house for college radio info.

Thirteen college stations, mostly from New England, attended this first convention, including reps from the U. of New Hampshire and of Connecticut, Rhode Island State, Wesleyan, Harvard, Cornell, Yale and Columbia. Spreading rapidly, IBS soon had 50 colleges lined up, and the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey saying "yes" to a sponsored program.

National Advertisers

Before the war, IBS had already inked contracts with such top-flight advertisers as Old Golds, Camels, Beechnut, Ingersoll, Gruen and Helena Rubenstein. However, before IBS could get fat on this moolah the war broke and the ad dough evaporated. By the spring of '42, the armed forces' dredge had sucked the campuses almost dry. And, to complicate the IBS predicament, the manpower shortage hit them where it hurt, dragging their best technicians away to work as wartime fill-ins with commercial stations. Most disastrous of all for IBS was the shortage of crucial equipment. For want of a tube, many a college station had to sign off the air for the duration. Yet, at the rock-bottom of the slump, which was at the tail end of '43, IBS was still chugging along with 14 stations functioning thru the country.

Once the war was over and consumer shortages were no longer so acute, IBS snapped back fast. Soon after the V-J bells quit ringing, GE, RCA-Victor and *The Herald-Tribune* had poured some of their post-war advertising tin into the IBS poke, and the reasonable expectation is for more and juicier pacts on the horizon.

Just as big nets won't touch a drop of liquor advertising, so a number of colleges are dead against going commercial. Thus, IBS has two types of stations—commercial and sustaining.

As it operates today, IBS has many an attractive angle. Thru its station rep, Intercollegiate Broadcasting Station Representatives, the commercial operation is vastly simplified, due to the fact that IBSR can negotiate for all college stations under its wing. So the advertiser sponsoring an IBS program doesn't have to fool around with a bewildering mess of underlings. He gets one bill—no matter how many colleges he covers—writes one check.

Standardized Rates

Besides this, because all colleges are rated in advance on the basis af actual enrollment figures, IBS has standardized rates, with colleges classified according to their respective coverage. One half-hour show on an A-rated college station costs $30, B-rated $24, C $18, D $12. Rates not only apply to colleges now active with IBS but also to any colleges that might join up in the future since, in the light of staple IBS criteria, they're already pigeon-holed.

In IBS's hands, the advertiser's dollar gets a four-way split, 15 per cent for the agency's commish, 15 per cent for the station reps, 20 per cent to cover the IBS running expenses and a fat 50 per cent return to all its member stations, in proportion to their coverage, which augments the station fund for expanding facilities.

Studio Space Free

As the final flourish in economical operation, IBS gets its studio space gratis from the colleges and the stations are operated by students who work for the fun and experience of it. No ghost walks. And when they leave school, old IBS men now working as technicians with radio firms remember their old pals and come across with plenty of technical advice and aid on an off-the-cuff basis. This way, IBS gets the newest gadgets in the how-it-works department with nary a crease in the bank roll.

IBS's commercial pitch is the compactness, extreme pollability and quickly ascertainable consumer-yens of its listening audience. Without hemming and hawing, IBS can tell its potential advertisers the who, what, where and how concerning its listeners and be fairly sure that it will come up with a lot of the right answers. Surveys, conducted by 2,500 students always on tap and doing it for free, cut down any tendency on IBS's part to wander off base.

Future Investment

To clinch the proposition, the advertiser can not only get a good crack at a solid and ever-expanding market in the here and now, but also makes a gilt-edged investment in the future. When they get out of college, a good section of IBS listeners will constitute the cream of the spending public, composing that elite group that reads *Fortune*, goes for expensive gimmicks and plays a molding role in everyday commercial life.

Tho IBS hasn't got, and most likely couldn't get, a patent on its device to feed radio programs over a power line (the original patent owned by North American Public Utility org has run out), yet it has the savvy and this gives it, for all practical purposes, a corner on the college market now and tomorrow. Obviously, any college aspiring to radio broadcasting will be magnetized to the IBS orbit, since their technical manual alone is a real must.

A last big plus on the IBS ledger, tho no one's saying much about it but everyone's fingers are crossed, is the hope that from IBS's studios and experiments in college broadcasting may come the fresh, young talent to sparkplug radio and television tomorrow. Neither fully-fledged nor big-time, college broadcasting might play its biggest role, whatever else happens to it, as radio talent's proving-ground.

INTERCOLLEGIATE BROADCASTING SYSTEM 1940 IBS

The Billboard RADIO